

KidsGrow plus the plants



Sowing the seed: Children at Arcadia Public School learn the benefits of gardening. Picture: Natasha Paes

By Jo Arblaster

THE children at Arcadia Public School are delighted to get their hands dirty today – World Environment Day – as the first school to join an initiative to introduce gardening into the school curriculum.

KidsGrow, created by education specialists and the Nursery and Garden Industry of Australia, is being supported by local businesses, including Cameron's Nursery at Arcadia.

Nursery owner Sonja Cameron said it would teach children to care for their environment from an early age.

"Children have a lot of obesity problems and a lot of parents are time-poor now so children don't learn how to garden at home," she said.

"We thought if we combined this with education on how to save water and get it into the schools, children would benefit."

KidsGrow allows children to design, build, grow and share the garden at school with the teacher as facilitator.

Teacher Shelley Warren said the project also cultivated pupils' academic, personal and interpersonal skills. "It encourages outdoor recreation, promotes stewardship of the school grounds

and develops self-esteem," she said.

She said the program was particularly helpful for boys with behavioural problems, who seemed calmer and chatted while gardening.

"When you want to find out things about children, you should talk to them while they're doing something. When they're gardening they talk about what they enjoy and you find out their strengths.

"It's getting kids active and away from wanting to play on computers, away from television and it's developing a natural interest that will stay with them."